

PRIORITY PLACEMENT PROGRAM POLICY CHANGE FOR NONDISPLACED OVERSEAS EMPLOYEES

The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Civilian Personnel Policy) (DASD(CPP)) has authorized a Department of Defense (DoD) Priority Placement Program (PPP) policy change that will facilitate the rotation of overseas civilian employees who are required to return to the United States after fulfilling their tour obligations.

Key points:

- Under long-standing DoD policy, employees hired locally in foreign areas who accept career or career-conditional appointments are limited to five years of employment in the absence of an intervening period of U.S. residency. When accepting such employment, employees are required to sign agreements acknowledging they are subject to rotation from overseas as a condition of employment. The five-year limitation benefits the Department in many ways, to include allowing as many employees as possible the opportunity to develop a global perspective.
- The PPP, which affords priority assignment rights to eligible employees, is the primary DoD placement program for employees without statutory return rights to a position in the United States. These employees are referred to as “nondisplaced” because they are not subject to involuntary separation.
- Prior to 2010, nondisplaced overseas (NDOS) employees were referred through the PPP with Priority 2 status. In terms of priority assignment rights, this meant that overseas registrants were second only to employees who are being separated by reduction in force, i.e., Priority 1 registrants. However, NDOS employees had the same priority as employees who were being separated for declining transfer of function outside of the commuting area.
- In May 2010, the priority for NDOS employees was changed to Priority 3 in order to reserve Priority 2 status for displaced employees.
- Since the May 2010 change, and particularly over the last three years, there has been a significant increase in NDOS employee registrations as the placement rate for NDOS PPP registrants has not kept pace with registrations. The result is a growing backlog of NDOS registrants that is impeding timely rotation and complicating succession planning for overseas commands.

- In order to increase the placement rate for NDOS employees and restore timeliness to the rotation program, the Department has determined that the pre-2010 priority policies for NDOS employees should be reinstated. These include registering the employees as Priority 2, referring them as Priority 2 for vacancies in the same Component, and referring them as Priority 3 to other Components. The purpose of the dual priority is to increase the opportunity for Components to place their own overseas employees. In addition, overseas registrants will retain mandatory placement status and be referred to all Components for the entire registration period. Effective with this change, the placement rate for these PPP registrants should increase and the average time from registration to placement should decrease. NDOS registrants will be referred to all Components for as long as they remain in the PPP.
- Several temporary changes are also being implemented to immediately reduce the current backlog of overseas registrants. Employees will be registered for a broader geographic area than normally required and those with varied backgrounds will be registered for placement in any type of position for which they are deemed well qualified based on their experience, education, and training.

Questions & Answers

Q: Why are NDOS employees required to return to the United States?

- In accordance with 10 USC 1586, the Secretary of Defense is obligated to establish and operate a program for the interchange of employees between the U.S. and overseas. A key feature of the DoD overseas rotation program is a time limitation on overseas employment. Employees who accept career or career-conditional appointments in foreign areas are limited to five years of employment in the absence of an intervening period of U.S. residency. When accepting such employment, employees are required to sign agreements acknowledging rotation from overseas as a condition of employment.

Q: What is the PPP?

- The PPP is the principal DoD program for providing civilian transition assistance to its workforce. Because of the PPP, DoD is exempt from Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP) procedures, which apply to all other Federal agencies as codified in 5 CFR 330, Subpart F.

Q: How does the PPP work?

- When filling vacant positions, DoD organizations are required to query the PPP database to determine if priority candidates are available. When well-qualified PPP registrants are matched to specific positions, they have mandatory placement status, which limits and in some cases removes the selecting official's option to choose from other recruitment sources. Registrants have different placement priorities based on how they are being affected. For example, employees who are subject to separation by reduction in force receive the highest priority – Priority 1. With few exceptions, DoD managers cannot select any other job applicant when Priority 1 registrants are available. Priority 2 registrants, a category which will now include NDOS employees, likewise block selections from most applicant sources, but they are not eligible for placement if Priority 1 registrants are available. Also included in the Priority 2 grouping are employees who are being separated for declining transfer of function or management-directed reassignment to another geographic area, and certain military reserve and National Guard technicians being separated due to loss of eligibility for dual status.

Q: What about Priority 3?

- Priority 3 is the lowest priority, and these registrants only take precedence over applicants who are not already employed by the recruiting Component. Besides overseas employees being referred to a different Component, this category consists primarily of various types of family member employees who are relocating with military or DoD civilian sponsors.

Q: Who benefits from the PPP?

- The PPP provides transition assistance to current DoD civilian employees affected by reduction-in-force and those who decline offers outside of the commuting area resulting from transfer of function or management-directed reassignment. In addition to NDOS employees, the PPP also provides priority assignment status to certain dual-status military technicians who lose military membership through no fault of their own, and military spouses and certain other family members who relocate with sponsors to new DoD duty stations. The Department also benefits from the PPP through the retention of skilled employees and reduced separation costs.

Q: Is the PPP an effective program for placing NDOS employees?

- The PPP can be very effective for registrants in the Priority 1 and Priority 2 categories. Predictably, the higher the priority, the sooner registrants are placed. As a rule, Priority 2 registrants stand a much better chance of being placed than Priority 3 registrants, and placements usually occur sooner after registration.

Q: How will this change affect those employees that are not NDOS employees but are currently registered in PPP in the Priority 2 category?

- Since they will have the same status as other Priority 2 registrants when referred within their own Component, NDOS employees may be selected when no Priority 1 registrants are available, even if other types of Priority 2 registrants are referred. Consequently, when both an NDOS and non-NDOS Priority 2 registrant is available and both are well qualified, the U.S. activity will have the option to make a job offer to either registrant.

Q: How will this affect NDOS employees who are already registered in the PPP?

- The priority for current NDOS registrants will be automatically changed through internal programming. As a result, current and prospective registrants will be referred as Priority 2 candidates when they match job vacancies in their own Component and Priority 3 when referred to other Components.

Q: Why do NDOS employees receive a higher priority for positions in their own Component?

- This provides greater opportunity for Components to return their own employees from overseas. If well qualified for a particular position, Priority 2 PPP registrants take precedence over job candidates from other recruitment sources whether or not those candidates are already employed by the recruiting Component. In other words, they have priority over both internal and external candidates. Priority 3 PPP registrants do not take precedence over candidates who are currently employed by the recruiting Component.

Q: How many NDOS employees will this affect?

- Approximately 1,700 NDOS employees are currently registered in the PPP, and all will be affected.

Q: How long has it been taking to place NDOS employees?

- In the four years preceding the 2010 change, NDOS employees were placed an average of 169 days after registration. That average has risen to 210 days since the change.

Q: If you are constantly changing the policy how does that better enable leadership to manage the workforce?

- PPP policy changes are constantly assessed to ensure that the intended outcomes are met. Although designed as an enhancement to overseas workforce management, the 2010 change has not had the intended effect. The new policy

change should better facilitate the interchanges of employees between the U.S. and overseas.

Q: How long will the additional temporary procedures be in place?

- To aid in clearing the current backlog of NDOS registrations, the temporary procedures will be in effect for 18 months beginning with the date of publication of the permanent changes in the PPP Handbook.